



U.S. Consulate General Amsterdam

February 2009
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Around The Corner

The U.S. Consulate General in Amsterdam's Newsletter



At Your Service

ESTA, you say? What is that all about?



ESTA is **not** for U.S. passport holders, it is not for holders of U.S. resident status, and it is not for holders of valid U.S. visas. ESTA stands for Electronic System for Travel Authorization. This system is required solely for non-American visitors to the U.S. who hold a national passport from a country participating in the Visa Waiver Program. This program has been in place since 1990 and does away with the requirement to obtain a visa provided the traveler meets certain criteria. Visa-free travelers, since January 12 this year are required to go through this extra step before traveling. Prior to their visit to the U.S. they must apply online for travel authorization. The idea is to ultimately phase out the paper version of the arrival/departure record, the little green form I-94W that used to be handed out on board the carrier when traveling to the U.S. So although ESTA may not be a requirement for you, your non-American spouse, children, friends or other non-American travel companions will need an ESTA when visiting the U.S. unless they already hold a visa. See page two for more detailed information.

Additional information on visa-free travel can also be found on our website at:
http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov/visa_waiver_program2.html

Questions on ESTA requirements can be sent by e-mail to the Custom and Border Protection office of the Department of Homeland Security that is responsible for the ESTA program:

ESTA@cbp.dhs.gov

What's In A Name?

The United States Consulate General of Amsterdam's newsletter has a new name: *Around The Corner*! Our aim is to inform U.S. citizens living in The Netherlands about news and events that may be of interest to them. Since August 1945, we have been located on the corner of the Museumplein and Gabriel Metsustraat where our entrance is. The Consulate General today continues a proud tradition of consular service that started way back in 1794 when the Holland States General recognized Sylvanus Bourne as the first American Consul General in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. If it's a passport you need, a notarial service or if you wish to register your newborn child as an American citizen, we're just around the corner. Our website has detailed information on what services we provide as well as how to schedule and prepare for your visit to Amsterdam:

Address http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov/hours_of_operation4.html



You Are In: Home > U.S. Citizen Services

Celebrate New York's 400th Birthday

Four Hundred Years ago, in 1609, Henry Hudson sailed the Dutch ship Halve Maen (Half Moon) to the New World.

It was the beginning of a long lasting contact between the Low Countries and what would eventually become the United States of America. The Halve Maen arrived at the shores of what today is called New York ten years before the Pilgrim Fathers arrived at Plymouth Rock. Soon after, even more Dutch sailing vessels arrived and settlements were founded along the river now bearing Hudson's name. This lasting bond between the cities of New York and Amsterdam is being celebrated as we remember our shared past and look forward to our common future. Amsterdam and New York will boast a year long of events in both cities most notably in April in Amsterdam and in September in New York. An overview can be found by clicking on the NY400 logo below (PDF file 94 Kb.).

On January 28, 2008 New York Mayor Bloomberg and Amsterdam Mayor Cohen conducted a press conference in New York, to officially launch the NY 400 year. The highlight of the event was the unveiling of a model of the of the NY400 Pavilion and plein, a gift from The Netherlands to the City of New York and will be located at Battery Park. It is designed by the renowned Dutch architect Ben van Berkel from UNStudio and is the embodiment of the Dutch Design the Netherlands is famous for.



The Consulate General will be CLOSED on February 16. In emergency cases involving American Citizens, please call 070-310 2209.

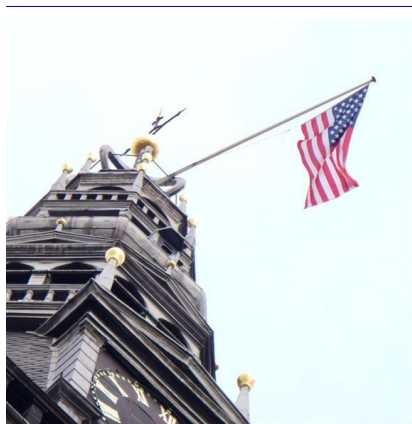




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De Oude Kerk Salutes the President

January 20, 2009 In honor of the inauguration of President Barack Obama, the Oude Kerk (the oldest building in Amsterdam dating back to 1260) flew an American flag from its clock tower and conducted a special carillon concert of American songs, including Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" and a medley of Gershwin classics. This was only the second time in the 700+ year history of the church that an American flag had flown from the tower. The director arranged for a special tour of the church highlighting the historic ties between the U.S. and The Netherlands that was attended by members of the American community and representatives from the Consulate General and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



What Is ESTA?

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On January 12, 2009 the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a reminder to travelers from all Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries that they are now required to obtain approval through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to traveling to the United States. ESTA applies to all eligible citizens or nationals traveling under the VWP, this *does not* apply to U.S. citizens or legal residents. American Citizens must travel to the U.S. using their U.S. Passport.

ESTA is a web-based system, initially launched in August 2008, that determines the preliminary eligibility of visitors to travel under the VWP prior to boarding a carrier to the United States. During the initial trial period of August through December, 376,759 persons traveled using ESTA. In January 2009, a total of 483, 282 persons traveled after registering with ESTA. According to DHS, the denial rate is less than 0.01 % which is about one in one thousand applicants and the average approval time is five minutes. The longest approval time is 72 hours. It is recommended that VWP travelers fill out the ESTA form on-line *at least* 72 hours in advance of travel.

Visitors may apply for travel authorization via the ESTA Web site at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> or by simply using the link on the main page of the U.S. Consulate General's website: <http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov>.

The citizens or nationals of the following countries are currently eligible to travel to the United States under the VWP: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Eight of these countries joined the VWP in 2008, and their citizens and nationals have been required to comply with an ESTA since their designation as VWP participants: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Malta.

For additional information on ESTA, visit www.cbp.gov/esta, and for more information on the VWP, please visit http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/business_pleasure/vwp/.

We Welcome Your Ideas!

The staff at the Consulate General is constantly thinking up new ways to improve our service and efficiency. For example, we recently initiated a Web-based appointment system which enables American Citizens and those requiring notarial services to schedule an appointment well ahead of their visit and we also installed a photo machine that takes U.S.-styled passport photos in our American Citizens Services waiting room. We also created detailed explanations of which documents you will need to bring for each particular service on our website <http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov>. As Europe's eighth largest passport issuance post, we are busy but ready to serve. If you have an idea or a suggestion on how we can make your visit easier or about items or subjects you'd like to see covered in this newsletter please let us know by emailing: USCitizenServicesAms@state.gov